

## Remarks to the United Auto Workers April 20, 1997

*The President.* Thank you.

*Audience member.* We love you, man!

*The President.* Thank you. I love you, too. And I appreciate you.

President Yokich, Secretary Treasurer Wyse, to the officers and the ladies and gentlemen of the United Auto Workers. I came here, more than anything else, to say two things. Number one, thank you very much for helping me and the Vice President become the first Democratic ticket to be reelected in 60 years. Thank you very much. [Applause] Thank you. The second thing I came here to say is that if we do the right things, we can build that bridge to the 21st century together.

You know, we've had a lot of monumental fights in Washington in the last 4 years. That's not all bad, and it was to be expected. You have lived through, in the last few years, the biggest economic change to occur in the United States and in the world since the global Depression of the 1920's and the 1930's. And this one, thank goodness, has not led to global depression, but you know how much things are changing.

And when I became President, there were a lot of assumptions here in Washington that had come to dominate our country's thinking and politics, during the years when the Presidents of the other party dominated the White House. People believed that you could talk about the deficit, but you didn't really have to do anything about it, that if there was anything done to help labor it was, by definition, bad for business. People believed that Government was always the enemy. And they believed that the only kind of tax cuts that were any good were ones that cut taxes on the very wealthiest Americans because they would somehow benefit everyone else by trickling down.

I came here believing we could balance the budget in a way that was fair to all Americans, get interest rates down, and help grow the economy, which would help people who have capital and invest it, but it would also help to lower car payments and home mortgages and college loan payments and make this country strong in the world again. I came here believing that the only long-term way to strengthen the American economy was to build the middle class, and that

meant we had to be pro-worker and pro-business, and we could do both.

I came here believing that in a country that now has only about 4 percent of the world's population, if we want to continue to enjoy about 20 percent of the world's wealth, we're going to have to get some other people to buy our goods, but we could only have free trade if it was also fair trade. And we have 200 separate trade agreements to show for our efforts in that in the last 4 years. All of these things you helped to make possible.

And if you think about the debates going on in Washington today—if you think about the fights we had in '95 and '96, which the American people were heard loud and clear on—they said, "We don't believe the Government is always the enemy." They said, "We do think we have a responsibility to protect education and the environment and the integrity of our health care programs." They said, "You can balance the budget without hurting ordinary Americans or trampling on the poor."

And I think that message is out there. I agree with President Yokich; you came about 10,000 votes short of having our party win the House of Representatives again because they outspent us 4, 5, or 6 to 1 the last 10 days. But we did a pretty good job. And by the way, I'm proud of the fact that you invested in our campaigns and helped us and fought for us and stood up for us and stood with us.

You hear all this talking today. You know, people forgot what was at stake there. In 1993 when we passed that economic plan, our opponents said it was the end of civilization as we know it. Remember all the things they said? "Unemployment will go up. The deficit will go up. The world's going to just go to pieces in America because of the President's economic plan."

Well, in 4 years this country produced over 11½ million new jobs for the first time in any Presidential term. They were wrong, and you were right. You were right—107,000 of them were in the auto industry. Unemployment now is down to 5.2 percent, a 9-year low. In 1995, average wages started to rise again for the first time in 20 years. And last year, over half of

the new jobs were in higher wage categories, in dramatic contrast to most of the new jobs we got in the years before we took office. We are moving in the right direction. You have supported the right policies. You should be proud of it, and you should make sure the American people know it.

In 1992, the year before I took office, Japan produced 28 percent more autos than American workers. By 1994, America had passed Japan for the first time since 1979, and you're still ahead of them. And I'm proud of you. In 1995, we finally got an auto agreement. And I'm proud to report that last year, in the first full year of that agreement, American auto sales went up by 34 percent in Japan. European sales went up by 10 percent, overall car sales only went up by 3 percent. If you give people the chance to buy American, even in Japan, they will buy American because you're putting out the finest cars in the world today. Auto parts sales went up 20 percent last year. They're now double what they were in 1992 in Japan.

We have a long way to go, and we made that clear yesterday, and we intend to keep working. But it makes the point I want to make: If we can open these markets to American products—the American people paid the price and you paid the price in the tough and difficult years of the 1980's and the early 1990's to dramatically increase quality and productivity. And you deserve the chance to sell your products anywhere in the world, and if you can, you're going to do very well.

Over 4 million more Americans own their own home. More than 10 million Americans have refinanced their homes with lower interest rates. The welfare rolls in 4 years dropped a record 2.8 million. We moved more people from welfare to work in the last 4 years than went on welfare in the first 25 years of the program. Don't tell me we can't reform the welfare system; we can—we can—move people from welfare to work if we do it right.

And that is just the beginning. We have got to do more. And as I said, I never believed that being pro-growth, pro-private sector, and pro-business meant being anything other than pro-worker, pro-union, and pro-family. I believe they are consistent, and I believe that the record proves that when we work together and when we're fair to everybody, we produce more, people feel better, and they're more productive. And I think it's time that everybody understood

that we don't want to be a hard-work, low-wage economy, we want to be a hard-work, smart-work, high-wage economy in which we all work together.

That's why I worked with you to defeat attempts to repeal the prevailing wage laws, to bring back company unions, to weaken workplace health and safety laws. That's why I fought for a tax cut that used to be supported also by members of the other party, the earned-income tax credit. Since 1993, we've ratcheted it up now so that the average family of four with an income of \$30,000 or less and two kids in the home has a \$1,000 lower tax bill than they did 4 years ago. Now they can go out and buy cars again. I think that's the right sort of tax cut to have in America to reward working people, and I think we're stronger because of it.

And I thank you for your support for the minimum wage increase. No person who works 40 hours a week in a country that preaches that people who are on welfare ought to go to work should live in poverty when they're working full time and trying to support their children. And we don't have to tolerate it.

On July 1st the historic legislation you helped to enact to make sure workers don't lose their health insurance if they lose their jobs takes effect. We've made pensions more affordable, and we've cracked down on pension fraud and abuse. Today, the fund that guarantees 42 million private sector pensions has saved the pensions of 8½ million Americans that were in danger when I took office and now has a surplus for the first time in its over 20-year history. We are moving to make work rewarded in this country and get the kind of security and support it deserves.

As Steve said, since I took office I have vetoed every piece of anti-worker legislation that has landed on my desk. And I will continue to do just that. *[Applause]* Thank you.

Now, I want to ask you for help on some other things as well. First of all, I want you to help me get Alexis Herman confirmed as Secretary of Labor. Now, listen to this: She was voted out of the committee unanimously. Every Republican in the committee voted for her. She gets to the floor, we're assured she's going to be brought to a vote, and all of a sudden they decide that maybe they can get me to change some of the executive actions I have taken to try to prevent anti-union activities when it

comes to Government contracts by saying, "We just won't give you a Secretary of Labor. We'll show you we don't agree with what you're doing. You got elected. You have the power to do it. The people voted for you. We voted your nominee out of committee unanimously." Some of her strongest support came from Republicans who knew her well and knew that she was a good and able woman and tried to be fair to business as well as labor. They knew she had a history in the Labor Department, a history of experience, and they said, "Okay, she's qualified. We all voted for her in committee. You won the election. You have the power to do this. But if you do it, we might not ever give you a Secretary of Labor."

Now, I don't think that's a very good way to run a railroad. You know, I don't refuse to work with them because they won the election. I know they wouldn't have voted for me, and that goes two ways. The American people made this decision. They put us both in the boat, and they told us to row. And we've got to figure out how to get the oars going in the same direction. That's what we've got to do. And we're working hard to do that.

We're working hard on this chemical weapons treaty to try to reduce the dangers of chemical warfare to our soldiers. Every Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in our major military organizations have endorsed this—every Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since President Carter's administration. And we're going to have to do it together. We'll never get a balanced budget unless we do it together.

Now, this is something we have to do together. And I'd like to say to them and to say to you: If they think I'm wrong about something I've done, we ought to sit down and talk about it. But we've got a qualified person, and Labor has been out a Secretary too long. Let's have a Secretary of Labor and confirm Alexis Herman. And I ask for your help to do it.

Twelve million people have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law since I signed it in 1993, the first bill I signed. Many people who have good jobs have family and medical leave through their contracts, but a lot of people don't. And we've proved now that if you help people succeed at home, so they're not worried sick at work about their children or their parents, you let them take a little time off for that, actually workplace performance goes up. We haven't lost jobs or lost small businesses

since the family and medical leave law came into effect. In fact, we've had a record number of new businesses started in every single year I've been President.

That's why I want to expand the family and medical leave law, to give people a little time off every year to go to regular doctor's appointments with their children and with their parents if they're sick or to go to regular parent-teachers conferences at the school. We've got to have the parents if we're going to improve the quality of education, and I think it will be a good thing to do.

I also would like to say to you that we have more work to do on this budget. Now, in the last 4 years—when I came here, people laughed at me when I said we could reduce the deficit and increase our investment in education, in medical research, in technology, in fighting crime, and in our future. Well, now we've got 4 years of declining welfare rolls, 4 years of declining crime rates. Every expert in America now admits we were right when they fought us in trying to put 100,000 more police on the street. We know we can do this.

But we also see that people are saying, "Well, maybe this recovery can't go on. Maybe interest rates are going up. Maybe if they don't, inflation will come back." You've seen all this. We need to go on and balance this budget to keep this recovery going. That will remove any question about inflation coming back in the economy and will keep interest rates down. It will make cars more affordable here and abroad. It will keep UAW members working. It will keep America strong. But we have got to do it in a way that protects the integrity of the things we fought 2 long years for in 1995 and 1996, for education, for the environment, for the integrity of these health programs. We have got to do that.

This balanced budget of mine does exactly that. It provides tax cuts for education and health care, to help raise a child and buy and sell a home. It protects Medicare and Medicaid but adds a lot of years to the Medicare Trust Fund. It is something that I'm very proud of in terms of what it does for medical research and for protecting the environment. And it is also very, very good for education. If you look at the future, we know that we have got to improve the performance of our schools if we want all of our children to have good jobs with growing incomes. We know that. We know that most of this has to be done at the local level

with support from the States, but we know the national level and we in the National Government have a responsibility as well.

My budget makes an unprecedented commitment of \$51 billion to make sure that by the year 2000, every 8-year-old will be able to read on his or her own, every 12-year-old can log on to the Internet, every 18-year-old can go on to college, and every adult can continue to learn for a lifetime and get the skills necessary to get good jobs.

I've laid out a 10-point plan for education; I just want to mention 3 to you. Number one, we have got to quit hiding behind the idea that we have local control of our schools and using that for an excuse not to have national standards in education. All of our competitors have national standards in education. And I am not talking about Federal Government standards; I'm talking about national standards. But I have challenged all the States to meet them and to give all of our children a test in reading at the fourth grade level and a test in math at the eighth grade level by 1999. And I hope you will support me in that wherever you come from in every State in America. It is the right and moral thing to do for our country.

We ought to open the doors of college to everybody who's prepared to work for it. I want to give a \$1,500 tax credit, modeled on the HOPE scholarship in Georgia, America's HOPE scholarship. That's about what it costs at any community college in the country. I want to give it for 2 years to open the doors of college for at least 2 more years to make them just as universal as a high school diploma is today by the year 2000. And we can do that. I think we ought to give people a \$10,000 tax deduction for the cost of any college tuition after high school, any higher education. It will help a lot of people in this room, I would imagine. And because we can never forget the people who don't make enough money to take tax deductions, I've also proposed the biggest increase in the Pell grant scholarships for needy students in 20 years, so we can all have the chance to go on.

The average age of people in college is going up steadily every year. It will continue to go up. You probably all know friends of yours in their thirties, in their forties, maybe in their fifties, who had to go back and get retrained. And we ought to have a system that makes it possible for every American who wants to

work, who's willing to work, who needs an education, to get it for a lifetime. It is simple, and it is good for the American economy. We ought to do it.

The last thing I want to say about that is, I've been trying for 4 years through Democratic and Republican Congresses to get the Congress to adopt my "GI bill" for America's workers. And I know there have been a lot of questions about it. Essentially, what I want to do is take 70 separate training programs, put them in a grant, and just give a chit, give a skills grant to people who are unemployed or underemployed and say, "You take it to the place nearest you which will be most likely to get you a job." Almost every American is within driving distance of a community college. This would include union-sponsored training programs, anything else, just whatever is necessary and whatever is most handy to get a job—the "GI bill" for America's workers.

I think we've wasted a lot of money on intermediaries and Government employees. We've got all this money here; give it to the people who are unemployed and you can go after them, everybody else can who wants to train them. But I believe a "GI bill" for people—I think most people have enough sense to figure out on their own, in their own communities, what would be most likely to put them back in the work force at a higher wage. And I hope you'll help me pass the "GI bill" for America's workers.

And just because we got beat on our attempt to say that everybody in America who works for a living and all their children ought to have access to health care, I hope you won't quit trying to expand health care access to the American people who need it. [Applause] Thank you.

I have proposed new legislation to crack down on Medicare fraud. I've appointed a new commission on health care quality to make sure that the lower costs of today's managed plans doesn't dilute the quality of them. We've moved to help fight breast cancer by making women 40 and over eligible for mammograms who are covered by Federal programs, which I think is important.

In my balanced budget plan, we are moving to try to stop the sort of drive-by mastectomies, where women with breast cancer are basically operated on and put out of the hospital in a matter of a few hours. We are moving to cover respite care for Alzheimer's victims, because there are so many families who care for a family

member with Alzheimer's. And having lost an aunt and an uncle to Alzheimer's, I know it's a 7-day a week, 24-hour a day job. We can actually save a lot of money over the long run if we help give those families a little help for respite care if they're willing to take care of those folks in their homes. It's so much less expensive, and if families want to do it, we ought to help cut them a little slack, I think.

We also want to give people access to health insurance when they temporarily are between jobs or lose their jobs. We want to make it easier for them, affordable for them to keep their health insurance. Nearly half of the children who lose their insurance do so because their parents lose or change a job. And my budget would provide coverage for up to half of the 10 million children today who do not have health insurance. I think it's very important to do more to try to cover children and to cover people who are between jobs.

Well, these are just a few of the things that I could be talking to you about tonight. They are big things. This will affect the way people live for generations to come. And while you're here, I want to ask you to think about that. We've had a lot of fun tonight. We've cheered, and we're glad we won the election—sorry we lost a few Congress seats. We're proud of the fights we fought, and we're awfully glad America is in better shape than it was 4 years ago. But what I want you to think about is what kind of America have you worked all your life for? What do you want this country to look like in 20 years, 25 years, when your children are your age, when your grandchildren are your age? I think about it every day—every day.

When I look at these kids out in this audience, I know if we do the right things, they will have more chances to live out their dreams

than any generation of Americans. That's the first thing I want. The second thing I want is for America to be the world's leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity a generation from now, just like it is today, because I know the whole world will be better off if that is the case. And the third thing I want, that I see as I look at all of you from your different backgrounds, is I want us to be one America.

We're going to become more and more diverse, racially, ethnically, religiously. If we can keep the democratic culture the values of America, if we can overcome our own prejudices and fears, if we can learn to respect each other's differences and enjoy our own difference but be bound together by what unites us, then in a world that is every day consumed by the problems of the Middle East or Africa or Northern Ireland or Bosnia, America will surely be the light of the world. And the labor movement has always stood for the proposition that anybody that was willing to work hard for a living ought to be given a fair chance to make it in the United States of America, always.

I love being with you. I'm very grateful. I'm glad you reelected me. I'm having a good time, limp and all. *[Laughter]* But remember, you can't stop thinking about what you want it to be like in a generation, because the world is changing in profound and fast ways. And we have to do a good job now and a good job for all these children who are here. I think we're going to do it together.

Thank you. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:05 p.m. at the Sheraton Washington Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen P. Yokich, president, and Roy Wyse, secretary-treasurer, United Auto Workers.

## Message on the Observance of Passover, 1997

*April 21, 1997*

Warm greetings to everyone observing Passover.

Commemorating God's liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, Passover is the story of a people who, sustained by their faith in God and strengthened by their own courage

and determination, broke free from oppression to seek a new life in a new land. Their journey was long and full of peril, and their resolve sometimes shaken by doubt; but ultimately the Jewish people reached the Promised Land,